

Montana's Definition of Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools

Resource: U.S. Department of Education's guidance document - *Frequently Asked Questions concerning Phase II of the State Fiscal State Stabilization Fund*, Dated 12/1/2009

Montana defines *Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools* as any Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that rank in the lowest five percent of these schools based on the percentage of students scoring At or Above Proficiency in Reading and Math using three years of assessment data. The following steps detail the process utilized to produce the list of *Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools*.

Step 1: Montana determined all relevant definitions. The definition of "secondary school" is any high school serving grades 9 through 12. The definition of "number of years" for purposes of determining whether a high school has a graduation rate less than 60 percent is three years. The definition of a "number of years" for purposes of determining "lack of progress" on the State's assessments is three years.

Step 2: Montana determined the number of schools that make up five percent or five schools (whichever is greater) in each of the relevant sets of schools (Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring) as the count of seven which is five percent of the total number in the set. Montana determined there are no secondary schools that are eligible for but do not receive, Title I funds.

Step 3: Montana determined the method for calculating combined English/language arts and mathematics proficiency rates for each school (see B-V-16).

The Single Percentage Method was used as defined in the U.S. Department of Education guidance.

Step 4: Montana determined the method for determining "lack of progress" by the "all students" group on the State's assessments (see B-V-17).

The Lowest Achieving Over Multiple Years was used as defined in Example 1 on page 27 of the U.S. Department of Education guidance. Using this method, Montana repeated the Single Percentage Method in Step 3 for two previous years for each school, and then selected the five percent of schools with the lowest combined percent proficient based on three years of data to define the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the State.

Step 5: Montana determined that no weights would be assigned to academic achievement of the "all students" group or to lack of progress on the State's assessments.

Step 6: Montana determined that no weights would be assigned to elementary schools or secondary schools.

Step 7: Using the process identified in Step 3, Montana ranked the Title I schools in improvement, corrective actions, or restructuring from highest to lowest based on the academic achievement of the "all students" group.

Step 8: Using the process identified in Step 4, Montana applied the second factor—lack of progress—to the list identified in Step 7.

Step 9: After applying lack of progress, Montana started with the school at the bottom of the list and counted up to the number seven as determined in Step 2 to obtain the list of the lowest-achieving five percent Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

Step 10: Montana examined the Title I high schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring to determine if any had a graduation rate of less than 60 percent over a number of years (as defined in Step 1) that were not captured in the list of schools identified in Step 9.

The only Title I high school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that has consistently had a graduation rate of less than 60% was already identified in Step 9.

Step 11: There were no high schools identified in Step 10 to add to the list of schools identified in Step 9.

Steps 12 - 15: There are no secondary schools in Montana that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds.

The list of schools resulting from Step 11 will constitute the Tier I schools and there are no schools resulting from Steps 12 – 15 to constitute the Tier II schools for purposes of using school improvement funds under section 1003(g) of the ESEA. All Title I participating schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are not on the list resulting from Step 11 will constitute Tier III schools for purposes of using school improvement funds under section 1003(g) of the ESEA.

In summary these are the methods that Montana used to produce its list of *Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools*.

Tier I: Lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, obtained by:

Ranking the Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring from highest to lowest based on academic achievement of the “all students” groups;

Applying lack of progress to the rank order list; and

Counting up from the bottom of the list.

Plus Title I high schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that have had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years (to the extent not already included).

Tier II: There are no secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds.

Montana examined the use of the flexibility (announced in the January 15, 2010 letter to Chief State School Officers from Dr. Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana) to identify newly eligible schools as Tier I, II, or III and discovered that no additional schools could be added to Montana’s lists for purposes of using school improvement funds under section 1003(g) of the ESEA.